



## CREATING PARTNERSHIPS

**Presenter: Hilary Binder-Aviles, Independent NGO Consultant  
Civic Leadership**

### Video Transcript

[TEXT: YOUNG AFRICAN LEADERS INITIATIVE  
ONLINE TRAINING SERIES]

[TEXT: Civic Leadership  
Creating Partnerships]

[TEXT: Learning Objectives]

1. Understand the benefits of partnerships with other NGOs, government, and business.
2. Learn steps for finding partners and building partnerships.
3. Learn ways to manage partnerships.]

[TEXT: Hilary Binder-Aviles, Independent NGO Consultant]

### Creating Partnerships

In this lesson, you'll understand the benefits of partnerships with other NGOs, government, business and others. You'll learn the steps for finding and building partnerships, and you'll learn ways to manage those partnerships.

As a nongovernmental organization, you can't achieve your vision for a better society alone. The community needs are too great, the social problems are too complex, and the resources are too limited.

Your NGO needs to work with a broad array of civil society actors — with other NGOs, with government, with universities, with others — to accomplish your goals.

In short, you need partners.

So what is a partnership? A partnership is when two or more entities come together to accomplish something that neither party can achieve alone.

Partners don't have to agree on everything, but they do have to share some common goals and be willing to share the labor, the risks, and then the rewards of working together.

There's many different kinds of partnerships. Some are informal and casual; you can talk to each other regularly, share information, ideas, experiences.

Then others are more formal and structured. These partnerships often involve two or more NGOs designing, and funding, and running a project together and having clear, written agreements to do so. So what are the benefits of partnerships?

By partnering with others...





- Your NGO can obtain resources such as funding, information, expertise, skills. A partner might provide a new NGO with rent-free space for its activities.
- You can also build your capacity to develop and manage projects. We all learn by doing, and smaller NGOs often partner with larger ones to gain that experience.
- Your NGO might be able to expand the reach of its services, its education, or advocacy efforts by partnering with an NGO that serves a completely different target population.

So, where do you start?

If your NGO is reaching out to find new partners, here's a few things you can do:

- Create a map of all the other civil society entities that are working in your community or working on your issues. Based on what you know about them, is there a fit with your vision? What could you offer them? And what could you gain from a relationship with them?
- Then get to know potential partners. Ask for an "informational meeting" — to share ideas, learn about each other's work. Invite them to your events. Attend their events. Begin to share information about activities, conferences, training opportunities, even fundraising ideas.
- Explore opportunities for collaboration. If you get to know another NGO that does similar work, you could offer them your training curriculum or other materials.
- You could bring your staff together to train each other and share their skills.

Once you gain some experience working with each other and building trust, then you might consider developing a more formal partnership — such as a project that you develop, and raise funds for and manage jointly.

It's good to start with something easy. Work together to co-sponsor a community meeting, or some other event that benefits everyone. Afterwards, you can assess what worked well, what didn't work so well, how did we each benefit, and do we want to keep working together?

Now, what are some of the challenges that you might face?

When you're just starting out you need to build relationships. Start with networking. Go to events, see who's there, introduce yourself, and follow up.

When you begin to build partnerships, you might face some conflict, some disagreements about goals, and priorities, and strategies. Some conflict is good — it can lead to better ideas and better plans.

But if you feel your potential partner is not being sincere or hiding information, you should stop right there. All successful partnerships are built on a foundation of honesty and transparency.

When developing a collaborative project, begin by establishing some ground rules. Agree on what, when and how you'll communicate, what you'll do if you disagree.





Partnerships take time and energy. Don't enter into more partnerships than you can manage. Be clear on your priorities. Sometimes you might need to say "no" if it's more than you can cope with at one time.

Remember that strong relationships, and trust, and shared goals with mutual benefits are the basis for successful partnerships. Regardless of where your NGO is in its lifecycle — if you're just starting up or you're well established — you still need to invest time and energy into building relationships with other NGOs, and government, and universities and others. Those relationships will change over time, but they're always critical to your NGO's sustainability.

So working together in collaborative partnerships can be a positive experience for everyone and bring about good work and good results — for your NGO and for your community.

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